

Labour Empathy Day - An Appeal to Governments, Citizens, and Global Authorities

Written by: Prof. Dr. Ghulam Zikria Khan Pandah

Every year, **May 1st is celebrated as Labour Day** across the world. However, this day should not merely be a public holiday or a symbolic expression of solidarity. It must go beyond ceremonies, banners, and speeches—it must become a **living movement**, a **practical initiative**, and a **sincere realization**. We must begin to **observe it as a "Day of Empathy"**—a day that demands understanding, feeling, and action for the real issues, pains, dignity, and respect of the labour force.

Double Standards or Apathy?

What kind of **double standard** is it that offices, schools, colleges, and institutions are closed in honour of Labour Day, but the very labourers this day is named after are still working? Construction workers, sanitation workers, field labourers, security guards, street vendors, factory workers, and overseas workers are all still on the job. Is it not blatant **insensitivity** that the white-collar class gets to rest while the working class continues to sweat? **If anyone deserves a holiday today, it's the labourers themselves**, not just government employees or unrelated office staff.

Labour Empathy Day: A Practical Movement

We must transform this day into **Labour Empathy Day** by taking real, meaningful actions:

- Not just ceremonies—**go and meet a labourer in person**.
- Youth should interact with workers and explain the importance of the day.

- **Raise awareness** among workers that this day is for **them**, not for the privileged class, so they feel recognized.
- **Listen to their concerns**, understand their struggles, and **respect their emotions**.

The Role of Public and Private Sectors

Labour Empathy Day is not just the government's responsibility—it is a **collective duty** of every individual and institution. If we truly claim to support workers, we must take action. On this day, the following services should be provided **free of charge** to workers:

- ☐ Barbers offer free haircuts
- ☐ Doctors organize free medical camps
- ☐ Hotels/restaurants provide free meals
- ☐ Transport companies offer free rides
- ☐ Tailors sew simple clothes for free
- ☐ Teachers offer free classes for workers' children
- ☐ Engineers and lawyers give free consultations
- ☐ Special discounts on essential items in markets
- ☐ Special prayers in places of worship for workers
- ☐ Private businesses observe a "shutter-down" so labourers can rest
- ☐ Run social media campaigns to honour every worker
- ☐ Philanthropists arrange special funds and gifts
- ☐ Recreational activities in community centres
- ☐ Pay workers **full wages for the day** without requiring work
- ☐ Set up employment information desks for job seekers

Government Responsibilities and Legislation

The government must recognize the importance of Labour Day **not just as a holiday**, but through **strong laws and enforcement**:

- Make it **mandatory for all workers to receive a day off** on Labour Day.
- Don't limit leave to white-collar workers—**ensure real relief** for blue-collar workers.
- Offer **special government aid** to labourers on this day.
- Organize inclusive events **with active participation of workers**.
- Include the **working class in media and education** with serious intent.
- Take concrete steps to protect **salaries, working hours, and safety**.
- Appeal to **UN and international bodies** for global legal reform in favour of workers' dignity and security.

A Global Movement

This idea should not remain local or national—it must evolve into a **global movement**. The **UN, ILO**, and other global institutions must be urged to make May 1st **more than a holiday**—it must be recognized as a **day of action, legal reform, and protection for labourers**.

The Overlooked Benefactors

We must recognize that those associated with seemingly low-status or ignored professions are actually the **true benefactors of humanity**, such as:

- Garbage collectors
- Sweepers
- Farmers in the fields
- Construction workers
- Cobblers, barbers, tailors, and security guards
- Kiln workers and load carriers
- Migrant labourers working away from home

Their services must be acknowledged not just in words but in **deeds**.

Gratitude and Recognition

We extend heartfelt thanks to all individuals, institutions, governments, and global organizations who are already working for the rights of labourers—especially NGOs, social welfare bodies, and public representatives who are **actively contributing to the well-being of the working class**.